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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 6095
RUEHKP/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7008
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9189
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT PRIORITY 1755
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 2619
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 9982
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 7973
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 ISLAMABAD 017546

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SUBJECT: BALOCHISTAN (5): THE PASHTUNS -- BALOCHISTAN'S OTHER TRIBES

REF: A. ISLAMABAD 14349
1B. ISLAMABAD 16269
1C. ISLAMABAD 16944
1D. ISLAMABAD 16962
1E. ISLAMABAD 16987
1F. ISLAMABAD 16994

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Peter W. Bodde,
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary/Introduction: In Balochistan, violent Baloch tribal leaders and vociferous Baloch nationalists grab the headlines, while the Pashtuns interests and issues are buried on the inside pages. Like the Baloch, the Pashtuns share deep-seated anger toward the federal government for Islamabad's exploitation of the province's natural resources without commensurate investment in the province's development or economy, particularly in Pashtun districts. Some Pashtuns accuse the Baloch nationalists of chauvinism in their calls for greater provincial autonomy, equating greater provincial control to greater Baloch control. Balochistan is also now home to thousands of Afghan refugees, the majority of whom are Pashtun, and is also a reputed safe haven for Taliban leaders directing operations in southern Afghanistan. Despite the province's large Pashtun population, it has thus far resisted the spread of "Talibanization" that has plagued the northern Pashtun belt. End summary/introduction. (

Note: This cable was researched before the August 26 death of Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti. (Ref C) End note.)

Who are the Pashtuns?

12. (U) Pashtuns comprise roughly 38 percent of the provincial population, slightly less than the 43 percent of the population that is ethnically Baloch. (Note: NGO representatives in Quetta say that rumors in the province contend that the Pashtuns have actually surpassed the Baloch as the most numerous ethnic group in the province. End note.) The Pashtuns dominate the northern quarter of the province,

considered by many the least-developed are of the least-developed province in Pakistan. The Pashtun areas of Balochistan are the southernmost stretch of the Pashtun belt that runs from the Hindu Kush in the north, straddles the Pakistan-Afghan border, and ends in the south in the Balochistan districts of Quetta, Sibi, and Loralai.

¶3. (C) Pashtuns communities are present in nine of Balochistan's 27 districts. There is also a narrow Pashtun corridor in the predominately Baloch Chaghai district that stretches westward along Balochistan's border with the Afghan provinces of Qandahar, Helmand, and Nimruz. In recent months, these Afghan provinces have experienced a violent resurgence by the Taliban, with some attacks launched from locations in Balochistan. According to Embassy interlocutors, Afghan refugee camps in these areas, such as Girdi Jungal, Pir Alizai and Posti, are prime havens for drug smugglers and gun runners.

Pashtun Political Alignment

¶4. (U) Balochistan's Pashtuns are politically divided among three different parties:

-- The secular Awami National Party (ANP), whose home base is the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), where it holds ten seats in the provincial assembly; the party has no seats in the Balochistan assembly and has only one seat in the federal Senate;

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-- The Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP), which has five seats in the provincial assembly, one seat in the National Assembly, and two in the federal Senate; and

-- The Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Fazlur Rehman Faction (JUI-F), a key member of the national coalition of Islamic political parties -- the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA). The JUI-F holds 17 seats in the 65-member provincial assembly, where it is part of the governing coalition, and holds roughly half of the MMA's seats in the National Assembly, where Maulana Fazlur Rehman leads the opposition.

Pashtun versus Baloch

¶5. (SBU) While the Pashtun share many of the same concerns as the Baloch (septel)--they feel that the federal government has taken advantage of the province's natural resources without adequately funding development, and worry about settlers from Punjab and Sindh tipping the province's demographic balance -- they do not support the Baloch agenda in its entirety. Pashtun political leaders from both the ruling PML and the opposition PKMAP describe the Baloch nationalists as presenting themselves as the only people of Balochistan. Pashtun leaders accuse Baloch nationalists of treating the jobs reserved in the federal bureaucracy for Balochistan as being intended strictly for ethnic Baloch, not the Pashtuns.

¶6. (C) Some Pashtun leaders nurture their own separatist aspirations. For example, Senator Mahmood Khan Achakzai (PKMAP) said that while the Pashtuns agree that Islamabad should give more power to the provinces, describing the central government as the "Punjabi empire," the best way to empower the Pashtuns was to create a "natural Pashtun homeland" made up of the NWFP, the tribal agencies and the Pashtun districts of northern Balochistan and the northwestern edge of Punjab. (Note: There is little prospect of this concept gaining traction, given the current political realities of Pakistan. End note.)

Skepticism about the Bugti Insurgency

¶ 17. (C) Pashtuns are generally not supportive of the current Baloch tribal uprising led by tribal sardars Bugti, Marri and Mengal (ref C), or to the rebel's attacks on infrastructure in the province's Sui gas fields. The Pashtuns sympathize with Nawab Bugti's fight to stop the GOP's efforts to build army cantonments in the province, the permanent military bases that Islamabad sees as key to protecting development projects. Many in Balochistan -- Baloch and Pashtun -- view these as Islamabad's effort to exert greater control over the province. Achakzai said, wryly observing that "Punjabis are good fish: they swim from cantonment to cantonment."

¶ 18. (C) Pashtuns are deeply skeptical about the motives of the Baloch tribal leaders, pointing out that two of the Baloch sardars currently at odds with the government -- Nawab Bugti and Sardar Mengal -- have formerly served as chief ministers or provincial governors. Many Pashtun recall that Nawab Bugti was allied with the government more often than against it. Pashtun leaders view the Baloch tribal sardars as placing more importance on sustaining tribal law -- and their unassailable positions as the heads of their tribes -- than fighting for the general welfare of the province.

The Afghan Refugees

¶ 19. (C) The Afghan Pashtuns are a source of frustration for
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both the Baloch and the native Pashtuns of Balochistan. Afghan refugee camps are considered havens for gun runners and drug smugglers, as well as possible hiding places for the Taliban from Afghanistan. As of December 2005, there were 683,000 Afghan refugees in the province, according to UNHCR. NGO workers and Quetta-based journalists say that the number of Afghans is actually substantially higher, as many cycle in and out of Balochistan, depending on the conditions on the Afghanistan side of the border.

¶ 110. (C) In separate August meetings with NGO workers -- including a Pashtun native of Balochistan and one of Afghan Hazara descent -- and with journalists, Poloff heard descriptions of near-universal resentment in Balochistan, especially in and around Quetta, against the Afghans. In some areas, local residents blame the Afghan Pashtuns for exacerbating the drought that has afflicted the province since the mid 1990s. They are accused of deforesting large stretches of land. Palwasha Jalalzai, a Pashtun from Qila Saifullah who works for the NGO SEHER, told Poloff that many Balochistan Pashtuns "completely resent" the Afghans. Balochistan natives also resent the refugees and Afghan economic migrants for obtaining Pakistani national ID cards and passports, and thus being treated just like Pakistanis. An Afghan refugee recently earned top grades in the town of Dalbandin and took the one spot reserved for a Dalbandin student at Balochistan's only medical school. "That one medical college seat could have gone to a local Dalbandin boy, who already is so disadvantaged," Palwasha lamented.

¶ 113. (C) The Afghans have created new neighborhoods that run from the edge of Quetta to the feet of the mountains that rise over the city. Pashtuns have built the extensive town of Pashtunabad, a lawless place that even the police and security forces refuse to enter, according to journalists and local interlocutors. In contrast, many of the estimated 300,000 Afghan Hazaras in Quetta, Shia Dari speakers from central Afghanistan, live in the neighborhood known as Marriabad. It is an area of neat, tidy, modern-looking, shop-lined streets. The Uzbeks, another non-Pashtun group, are the poorest of the Afghan refugees, working as the day-laborers and living in mud-walled compounds in a low

lying area of the city squeezed between the railroad line,
Balochistan University and Pashtunabad.

The Taliban

¶14. (S) Afghan Taliban leaders -- virtually all ethnic Pashtun -- are widely suspected of hiding in the Pashtun areas of Balochistan, including Quetta, according to the local contacts and journalists. In July 2006, the GOP initiated what it termed concerted effort to expel Taliban members from the country, beginning with raids and arrests in and around Quetta on July 16 - 18, in which more than 200 Afghans were rounded up. More arrests occurred in August, including 28 suspected Taliban members at a hospital in Quetta. Senator Sarwar Kaker (PML) was skeptical that these arrests -- and the subsequent expulsion of 58 Afghans arrested who lacked immigration documentation but who were not considered Taliban -- would have much effect given the porous nature of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Like many of post's interlocutors, he expected the 58 to drift back into Pakistan because there is more work on this side of the frontier. Quetta-based journalists told poloff that the arrests were "a joke" because the police had arrested ordinary Afghans, not high-level Taliban. In contrast, Syed Salman Muhammad, the top ranking officer in the city police department, asserted to poloff that all the Afghans the police rounded up were Taliban, explaining that police policy now was to focus on Afghans without valid immigration or refugee documents through raids in places where single Afghan men were known to live. The police were not/not harassing

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Afghan families with valid refugee status, he said.

Comment

¶16. (S) Comment: From a brief visit to Quetta and extensive outreach to Balochistan contacts in Islamabad, post concludes that there has been minimal spillover in Balochistan of the "Talibanization" phenomena present in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), despite allegations of the Taliban's heavy presence in Quetta and along the Afghanistan border. While Baloch-dominated districts may be naturally immune to the ethnic-Pashtun Taliban, even Pashtun-dominated districts appeared to be only minimally influenced by Taliban ideology. End comment.

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